



Judge

What happens at Family Court?

The judge in family court listens to what everyone has to say. It is their job to make sure that the right decisions are made to keep a child safe and well.

The judge will check that children's social care have done everything they can to keep a child with their parent.



Children's
Guardian

They will ask someone called a 'Children's Guardian' to help the court decide what is best for the child to keep them safe and well. This person is independent. That means they don't work for the council or court.

Who will be in family court?

Hearings are private.

Only certain people are allowed in family court.

- The judge
- Parents
- Barristers or Solicitors (for the child, parents, local authority)
- Children's Guardian
- Social worker
- Independent Advocate
- Intermediary



Family Court



How long will care proceedings last?

The court will try to decide what is to happen to the child within 26 weeks. This is about six months.

Sometimes if the case is difficult, it can take longer.

During this time lots of work will be happening.

There will be different types of hearings that a parent needs to go to.

Hearings are like a meeting that take place in the court.



What do people wear in court?

The judge will wear a suit.

Judges do not wear a wig or gown.

Professionals will wear smart clothes.

The court know that parents will be nervous so try to make sure that parents feel comfortable and are not frightened.



Can I visit the court?

Parents can visit the court before proceedings start to help them see what the room is like.

An advocate can help with this.



What happens at the first court hearing?

The court will make some important decisions.

They will say:

- If they agree with the interim care plan
- Where the child will live while the hearings take place
- Who the child will see until the last hearing has happened
- What needs to be done and what information and evidence is needed

The court will decide what type of order is needed while the proceedings take place.

An advocate can explain what the orders are.



What happens next?

There will be some more hearings.

Hearings help the judge make sure that proceedings are fair.

Hearings make sure that things are done on time and in the right way.

Hearings help the court to decide who the child should see and live with.

It is important that parents work with their solicitors and get ready for each hearing.

It is important that parents try to do everything they are asked to do.

Each hearing has a different name.

An advocate can explain what the hearings are.



What happens at the final hearing?



It is important that parents meet with their solicitor before the hearing.

They can ask questions and go through all the paperwork and reports.

The solicitor will also help parents to write a statement for court.

At this hearing the judge will decide where the child will live.



The judge may decide on a care order.

There are different orders.

An advocate can explain what these orders are.